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“Some Thoughts on Learning by Reading the Tools: Embodying the Time Image”
Peer Bode

I would like to begin by suggesting some terms of significant contemporary use and value. These are terms repeated and amplified throughout electronic and digital culture. They are ones I would like to briefly comment on. They are the terms “and”, “next”, “time based media”, “metonymy” and “next bodies”.

But, before that, let's reflect on some past notions of multimedia. Multimedia might possibly be the oldest human art form, older than glass, older than ceramics. In the French caves that contain what we call cave art we notice that the caves are filled with drawings of groups of animals. In the cave rooms immediately next door, in rooms similar in size and equally protected we find no pictures. Coincidentally or not, we also find that the drawing rooms as opposed to the next-door rooms are highly resonant rooms, live we might say, excellently amplifying sound, causing resonance, echoes and enrichments of sound events, truly transcendent spaces. A real time natural sound processor, amplifier, nervous system exciter, very nicely suited as a space enhancer for a room of drawings, for a room that could also have easily been a room for fire and so fire play and shadow play and sound play and trembling drawings. You get the picture. It was powerful early multi media. It was the early ancient predecessor of the exhibition of new digital work we have in the gallery now, here at Shanghai University. Unfortunately those early fantastic events, those experiences and memories were not recorded, other than the drawings. Just the drawings and the resonance remain. We might imagine the early work. We might very well be repeating some well rehearsed ancient human moves and fascinations. As Nam June Paik, Korean video artist has said, “the video synthesizer is thousands of years old and the moon is the oldest TV.” Ralph Hocking, the American video artist and personal studio tool developer might have said, “find a good space, put together some interesting electronic tools and start experimenting”.

Following these thoughts of ancient multimedia, I 'd like to tell you of some activities of contemporary media work and specifically of the Institute for Electronic Arts (IEA) at Alfred University, in Alfred, New York. The IEA is a set of projects: an artist residency program, Smart Wall exhibitions, conferences, publishing, complementing undergraduate and graduate art education etc. The IEA functions in the space of art and science and engineering. The IEA is a partnership of education, industry and art agencies to create

spaces for the making and living in new media art world caves. The College within the University that houses us is a materials college of art and engineering that supports the business and cultural life in New York State, nationally and internationally. The College is an unusual academic combination that has evolved and grown over time, building in depth and richness through the synergy of art and engineering cultures. Artists and engineers understand synergies. The IEA is our contemporary cave where artists, engineers, scientists and scholars come to imagine, build and create new media art.

Lets return now to the set of contemporary terms mentioned earlier. First the word “And”, this is, of course, a term in mathematics and also of the Arithmetic Logic Unit, the ALU, a chip deep in the hardware of all computers. Within an earlier other culture, in Art Modernism, that American art history whipping boy, we have a period or schema of “Either/Or”. Followed by the already aging successor, Post Modernism, a period or schema of “And”. Gilles Deleuze, the French philosopher, shown great interest in American intellectual circles, has laid out marvelously shaped models that involve “And” systems: linkages, networks, flows, intensities, new bodies, the active and the reactive. For Deleuze philosophy is a tool for thinking. It has been said that Deleuze is the philosopher of the 21st century. Remember that that Sigmund Freud completed his book on the unconscious in 1899, releasing the unconscious into the Western world in 1900 to kick off the 20th century with it. It took till the 1930’s for his ideas to become the art research of the Surrealists and then become one of the main theoretical stories for the 20th Century. Now at the beginning of the 21st Century both Freud and Deleuze’s ideas move much much faster. We are now not in the methodology of “either/or” but in that of the productive “And” systems.

The word “Next”, there was a time, maybe we are still in it somewhat that the “New” was the driving paradigm. Joan Shigekawa of the Rockefeller Foundation gave a keynote speech at an important New Media conference in New York in the early 90’s. In it she spoke of the importance of getting used to the space of change and to more strategically think of change with the term ‘Next’. She had just returned from travels visiting “Next” Media Centers in Europe and in Japan, Zentrum fur Media Kunst (ZKM) in Germany, Ars Electronica in Austria, IRCAM in France, ISEA in Japan. I thought of the Experimental Television Center in Owego, New York and Harvest Works in New York City and Siggraph with its traveling computer graphic art exhibitions. I also think to the past of the famous Cine clubs through out the capitals of Europe in the early 20th Century and those in America from the 40’s on where artists had shared access to “Next” media tools and spaces to produce and exhibit, a place to “screen” their new work, or better “Next” work, to fellow artists and “Next” audiences.

“Time Based Media” and I think of such terms as abstract space and abstract time. There is Karlheinz Stockhausen, the German Electronic Music composer and performer’s notion of “the moment form”. There are his “intermodulations”, “nets of sounds”, “grids”, “webs” and “splinters”. And more recently, there are the global new media terms of “interfacing”, “navigation” and good old next “emersion”.

“Metonymy”, a thousand sails set out to sea. Not metaphor, not one element substituting for another but metonymy, an element selected from a larger lived set to refer to that larger set. An idea well suited to the notion of the database, that is context, that is lived experience. How will this next idea of selected lived elements of common experience, metonymy, be generative in the present and future new media global moments?

“Next Body”, the body in media emersion is one of the next bodies, it is a real as well as a networked and virtual body. The body in a sensuous space, experience. The body in a mental space, thinking. This is a different body. This is our body in local and global media spaces. Is this the real time interactive body of American composer Pauline Oliveros’s “Deep Listening” scores? Is this the real time body and tools of Woody and Steina Vasulka’s (Czech and Icelandic video artists) “dialoguing with the systems” strategies?

In the late 80’s there was an exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art called “Image World”. It was an exhibition of work against a background of exploding commercial imagery, early computer capitalism and the “Simulation” theories of French theorist, former sociologist, Jean Baudrillard. These were also the last moments before the Internet became public. This was also ironically the moment American public television and public education including higher public education became less public and more private.

In 2000 Nam June Paik, the Korean, possibly also Japanese, German and American artist had his third major retrospective with the help of curator John Hanhardt at the Guggenheim museum in New York City. This exhibition was a celebration of global worlds, of artist networks, of high and mass art. It was pursuing the play of technologies, pursuing the connection of art, technologies and philosophies. The implications of this exhibition are still only beginning to be understood.

Our next moment, now, is of enlarged contexts, “next” global worlds, configurations and networks. It is the “next” now of personal computers, personal media studios, digital television and radio, Internet, “next” production and exhibition venues and forms. And what is “next” of books, magazines, cds, dvds, mp3s, quicktimes, galleries, museums, Universities, art schools, media centers and libraries? What are these next media information ecologies and media information mappings? What are these media as human forms, satisfying human needs and potentials? Look to media artists to find those “next” human spaces and times.

21st century bodies are reforming or better yet reappearing, redefined. Lakoff and Johnson’s book “Embodiment” is the work of a linguist and an analytic philosopher combining the researches of 90’s cognitive science together with language and philosophy to articulate a “Next Body” for local and for global thinking. Deleuze might like it. More speculation, if language was so dominant a form and conceptual subject in the 20th century then this “Next Body”, this embodied thought, might be the dominant changed, human notion for the 21st Century. In thinking about it, in working in the

material body of it, in and with the tools, in the new “next “ media, we are already living and experimenting in it.

Here at Shanghai University, representing contemporary media art researches from art schools around the world, we have had the opportunity to see and hear the new and “Next” media dialogues. It has been a great pleasure. These are the embodied time media thoughts of the local and global.

Peer Bode
Institute for Electronic Arts
Alfred University
Alfred, New York, USA